



Études irlandaises

35-1 | 2010
Varia

Best Irish Poetry in English

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Electronic version

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/etudesirlandaises/1868>
ISSN: 2259-8863

Publisher

Presses universitaires de Rennes

Printed version

Date of publication: 30 June 2010
Number of pages: 166
ISSN: 0183-973X

Electronic reference

Clíona Ní Ríordáin, « *Best Irish Poetry in English* », *Études irlandaises* [Online], 35-1 | 2010, Online since 30 September 2010, connection on 24 April 2019. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/etudesirlandaises/1868>

This text was automatically generated on 24 April 2019.

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REFERENCES

Matthew Sweeney (ed.), *Best Irish Poetry in English*, 2010, Cork, Southword editions, ISBN 978-1-905002-34-4

- 1 For past number of years, Southword editions has produced a *Best of Irish Poetry* volume. The anthologies provide a useful guide to Irish poetry published in a given year. This year's offering, spanning the period July 2007 to July 2008, consists of the 50 best Irish poems written in English (previous volumes had also included poems in Irish). In his introduction, editor Matthew Sweeney recounts the long afternoons spent in the Reference Section of Cork City Library reading through poetry magazines. For Sweeney, who lived outside Ireland for a number of years, the sheer variety of production was surprising and he commends the many fine small presses (Bradshaw Books, Doghouse Press, Arlen House) which publish poetry in Ireland.
- 2 The task of the anthologiser is a notably difficult one but Sweeney has chosen wisely. Alongside well-established poets like Seamus Heaney, Paul Muldoon, Pearse Hutchinson, there is space for new or relatively new voices like Leanne O'Sullivan, Ciaran Berry and Adam Wyeth. Sweeney also manages to surprise us with the poems selected – as is the case with Derek Mahon's "Ode to Björk". This should send a whole new generation out in search of Mahon's poetry. And Dennis O'Driscoll's "Compo" could well become the rallying cry of a nation discontented with the state of things in Ireland. As Sweeney himself says in his introduction, much of the poetry here is formal and lyrical in nature and the time constraints of publication have meant that no poems from two remarkable poets, Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin and Thomas McCarthy, figure in this volume as their collections were published after the cut-off date. We look forward to reading them in next year's volume. Southword is to be commended for this initiative which allows us to return to poets we know and like, while attracting our attention to talented emerging writers.